

Central Intelligence Agency
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Subject: NIE-17 Probable Soviet Reactions to a
Remilitarization of Western Germany

1. The Soviet leaders are probably convinced that if Western Germany should be fully rearmed, given equal status with the NATO powers, and closely associated with them in the alliance, the situation would present grave threat to Soviet security. They probably estimate that a revived and rearmed Western Germany would sooner or later draw its allies into a campaign for German reunification and for the recovery of lost German territories now in the Soviet sphere. They doubtless also believe that a German army would represent an ideal tool for an attack by capitalist countries on the Communist citadel. The threat of Germany to Russia is of long standing, and has frequently called for extreme counteracting measures. Conversely, Soviet leaders probably recognize that without German manpower, Western Europe can neither threaten Soviet security nor defend itself against Soviet attack.

2. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that the Soviets will consider that a program of German rearmament, once well under way, will stop short of complete remilitarization. They will have faith neither in the will nor in the ability of the western powers to limit Germany to purely defensive military forces. It is therefore to be expected that the rulers of the USSR will seriously consider going to war whenever they become convinced that progress toward effective German rearmament, and toward political solidarity between Western Germany and the western powers, has reached the point where it cannot be reversed by other means.

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S E C R E T

- 2 -

3. The creation of an effective German defensive force cannot be accomplished in less than two or three years, however; to build a strong offensive military establishment would take longer. In the meantime, taking advantage of the many basic conflicts in western opinion, the USSR will have available many courses of action which may, without provoking war, tend to dissolve the connections between West Germany and the western powers, and to weaken the cohesion and prevent the strengthening of the NATO itself. Unless the USSR desires war for other reasons, therefore, it will not be likely to precipitate it in reaction to the early stages of West German rearmament. The principal immediate objective of Soviet policy will nevertheless probably become to hinder and delay the progress of German rearmament.

4. In the Soviet program to accomplish this objective, the most important element, on which indeed the general success of the program will hinge, will be the inculcation throughout Europe and the western world of a conviction that German rearmament will inevitably lead to war. Since many Germans and western Europeans already hold this opinion, its further dissemination should not be difficult. Suiting their words to their audience, the Communists will suggest that German rearmament will result in German aggression, or that it will become an instrument of US aggression, or that it will so gravely threaten the USSR and its Satellites as to force them to initiate a defensive war.

5. The USSR has already made unequivocal announcements of the seriousness with which it views German rearmament. These have appeared in the Prague Declaration, in Soviet notes to the western powers asking for a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers and in the notes of 16 December to France and Britain. Meanwhile, the European Communist parties have intensified their

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

- 3 -

efforts, especially in Western Germany, to increase the fear of war and to point out that Germany will inevitably become a battleground in such a conflict. Propaganda efforts along these lines will doubtless be redoubled. The attempt will be to create a state of general alarm and despondency, in which further and more positive courses of Soviet action will have their best chances of success.

6. The positive policy which the Soviets now propose consists of a renewal of their earlier suggestions for peaceful re-establishment of German unity through the summoning of an all-German constituent council and the formulation of a constitution. In this way the Soviets are seeking to provide an attractive alternative to the war and destruction which they predict if Western German rearmament goes forward. On the one hand, they by the Grotewohl letter have encouraged both East and West Germans to submit a common proposal for unification to the consideration of the four occupation powers; on the other, they have requested that the general outlines of a plan for German unification as presented in the Prague Declaration be discussed at a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers. The Soviets during the next months will urge upon the world diplomatically and ^{by} propaganda the reasonableness of their proposals for German unity, and will emphasize by contrast and with thinly veiled threats the inevitable consequences which will arise from a failure to settle the German problem "peacefully" at this time.

7. Against the background of apprehension, indeed by the rearmament program, this approach may well have now a stronger impact on the Germans than it has in the past. Not only have the Soviets appealed to the German desire for a unified state; they have, by means of the Grotewohl letter to

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

- 4 -

Adenauer, encouraged the Germans to take more initiative towards unification. They can, of course, reinforce these moves by appealing to various Western German irritations with the western occupying powers, and to the desire of West German businessmen for increased trade with the East. They can perhaps find even among conservative Germans a disposition to cooperate with the USSR in the belief that superior German intelligence and technique will eventually triumph over Russian stupidity. But the most powerful weapon of the Soviets against the Germans will be the threat of war.

8. A major and increasing effort will doubtless be made by the Soviets to hinder German rearmament by dividing the western powers. If a Council of Foreign Ministers is held, the USSR will use it to further this objective. To the French the Soviets will play not only upon the fear of general war but upon the fear of German rearmament. They may make a more or less definite proposition to establish a disarmed and "neutralized" Germany, and perhaps also to guarantee French frontiers. They may remind the French of the traditions of Franco-Russian alliances for protection against Germany. Especially in view of the adverse effects which the Korean situation has had upon French confidence, it may well be that such an offer would be hard for the French to resist. Even the British, who are by no means unanimously reconciled to the prospects of German rearmament, might also find it difficult to remain impervious to suggestions for a "peaceful" settlement. Although the British would doubtless face the prospect of atomic bombing of London with fortitude if their national existence were at stake, it is not certain that they would care to do so over what could be represented as the mere question of German rearmament.

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

- 5 -

9. Since it is estimated that the Soviets will not wish to precipitate general war at an early date solely in order to prevent German rearmament, it follows that they cannot use overt military action against Western Germany or Berlin either by their own troops or by those of the satellites, including East Germany. Any such action would almost certainly lead to war. Provocative military and para-military demonstrations will probably be employed, primarily for the purpose of advertising the seriousness with which the USSR views the problem, and thereby of further frightening the Germans and the western powers. Such displays may take the form of ostentatious exhibitions of the military strength of Soviet and Bereitschaften forces, mass demonstrations of Communist youth and labor groups, etc. Outbreaks of violence in West Berlin and Western Germany may also be staged.

10. A renewal of the Berlin blockade must be considered a possibility. Such a renewal would probably be preceded by harassing tactics designed to make the allied position in Berlin difficult or untenable; these could be represented as actions of the German Democratic Republic, and would therefore carry less risk of provoking local armed collisions which might lead to war.

11. In summary, it is estimated that although the Soviets will eventually be willing to run the gravest risks of general war in order to prevent the rearmament of Germany and its consolidation into the western block, they will refrain from accepting such risks until other possibilities have been exhausted. Since any settlement of the German problem satisfactory to the USSR would presumably be unsatisfactory to the US, the Soviets will base their campaign for preventing German rearmament on the most strenuous efforts to break the will of the western European powers to resist, to weaken the NATO, and to intimidate the West Germans. If these efforts fail, they will turn to more drastic measures, including recourse to war if ultimately necessary.